

STEPS to host a forum

By ROB GLIDDEN
STAFF WRITER

The Southington Town-Wide Effort to Promote Success (STEPS) is inviting the community to a forum at the Aqua Turf Club in March.

At this event, the group will unveil the results of their latest survey results about the drug and alcohol use among Southington's youth.

"We're planning a really great event," said STEPS Coordinator Kelly Leppard. "We're not just revealing the results, we're hoping participants can leave with the tools to continue the work in

town."

STEPS has been very active in town since 2008 and is known for its creative approach to raising awareness of their goals and concerns within the community. Recently, a seven minute video was posted to the group's website that interviews many STEPS participants and articulates the program's mission.

For several years, STEPS efforts have been funded by a five-year federal grant from the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The grant has allowed the organization to

continue expanding its scope in the community, and recently Evelyn Ciaburri was hired to an assistant coordinator position.

"STEPS is very personal to me," Ciaburri said. "I worked on it in high school. To be on this end is great because you get an idea of how much STEPS actually does."

Those who wish to attend the forum are urged to RSVP with the group by sending an email to forum-steps@gmail.com. The event is on March 7 and begins at 7 p.m.

Southington's Own

Town takes positive STEPS

Every month The Observer, which is produced in Southington, for Southington, will highlight other groups, organizations, business, activities or products that are also unique to the town.

This month we take a look at STEPS, which was formed out of a dark time in Southington, but has gone on to become a beacon of hope and change.

Years ago, Southington was shocked by a rash of youth suicides. Many in the community were rocked and STEPS (Southington Town-wide Effort to Promote Success) was formed.

STEPS includes students, parents, educators, clergy, law enforcement and many other people within the Southington community.



According to its website, some of STEPS initiatives include preventing and reducing substance abuse in the community, helping the youth build core competencies and offering safe outlets for recreation.

STEPS has worked with local law enforcement to help enforce the age limit for alcohol and tobacco sales and has erected two billboards around town in

recent years.

A central part of STEPS is the concept of "developmental assets." The program evaluates a student's quality of life by measuring how many "assets" he or she has. These assets can be anything from involvement in youth activity groups to a safe school. The group feels that if the community at large works to provide these assets, it will provide a "safety net" to keep kids away from drugs and other dangerous behavior.

For more information on STEPS visit the group's website at Southingtonsteps.org.

If you have any suggestions for this piece please email them to Editor Ed Harris at eharris@southingtonobserver.com.

Correction-In last weeks issue we incorrectly listed the school of three of the Southington Education Foundation (SEF) grant winners. Teachers Dan Murdzek, Joyce McAloon and Krista Tibbetts are from Flanders School. We apologize for the error.

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